Reviewer's report

Title: Efficiency of Health Centers Groups in Lisbon and Tagus Valley - An approach with Data Envelopment Analysis

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Reviewer: Steffen Flessa

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting article. The topic is relevant, the methodology is innovative and the results are of high importance. This article must be published!

However, I have severe doubts whether BMC Health Services Research is the appropriate journal. Usually BMC HSR publishes articles which do not put so much emphasis on the methodology. I am sure that this article would fit to a health economic journal, such as Health Economic Review. The authors and the editors should decide that.

The text which was given to me has some formatting problems. For instance, the references got lost. Instead of [12] there is only [?], sometimes only (?). Therefore, it was difficult to follow the references.

Other comments:
- “We investigated the horizontal equity based on the territorial unit NUTS III and this analysis showed that here is no evidence of relevant differences.” Is that really methodology or already results?
- First sentence: “more” ? more than what?
- At least in theory there is a difference between primary health care as concept and primary care as level of services. I assume you mean primary care when you say primary health care but you should distinguish that.
- Page 2: you already explain here why you selected this specific methodology. This should be avoided.
- The whole section of Portugal and the health care history is interesting but I am not sure that it is the right place here. Maybe shorten it.
- The table on DEA methodology is on the wrong place. It should be in the methodology section.
- I do not think that somebody who does not know the methodology would understand it. You should either explain it in more details (for instance all the different DEA models) or illustrate it with graphs. Or both.
- From my perspective you do not explain why you used this specific methodology. You just say “it is recent”. But this is no quality at all. Does it fit?
Why not something else?
- You should make clear the difference between your methodology and stochastic frontier analysis.
- The fact that higher purchasing power has a negative effect on efficiency is very surprising and would require more explanation.
- The same is true for the population.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

none at all.